

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA  
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2250**

**TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2023/ PHALGUNA 23, 1944 (SAKA)**

**FACILITY OF BATTERY CARS TO PILGRIMS AT VAISHNO DEVI**

**†2250. SHRI BHAGIRATH CHOUDHARY:**

**Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:**

**(a) the establishment date of Shrimata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board and the details of the works undertaken for facilitating pilgrims and visitors since its establishment, year-wise, work-wise, place-wise;**

**(b) whether during the last two-three years Shrine Board has started operating a new tarakote way from Katra to Ardhkumari and this way is being used by pilgrims and visitors along with petrol and diesel vehicles for supply of daily use items and construction materials;**

**(c) if so, whether the Government is considering to start battery cars on this new tarakote way like battery cars being run from Ardhkumari to Bhawan for facilitating pilgrims, if so, the time by which it is likely to be started and if not, the reasons therefor;**

**(d) whether the Shrine Board is considering to run 40-42 battery cars in place of approximately 20-22 battery cars operational between Ardhkumari to Bhavan and also reduce their frequency from two hrs. to one hrs. each; and**

**(e) if so, the time by which the same is likely to be started and if not, the reasons therefor?**

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS  
(SHRI NITYANAND RAI)**

**(a): As per the information provided by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board was established in the year 1986 in terms of the Jammu & Kashmir Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Act,**

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**1986. The details of the works undertaken by the Shrine Board for the facilitation of pilgrims and visitors since its establishment are given in Annexure.**

**The information regarding the activities taken by the Shrine Board are also published in the Administrative report, which is being regularly published from 2016-17 onwards on the official website of the Board.**

**(b): As per the information provided by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, the new Tarakote track has been opened for pedestrian pilgrims. However, limited vehicles are permitted to ply on this route for transportation of supplies/construction material, ambulances for medical evacuation of the patients and fire tenders and other vehicles for mitigating any eventuality/disaster.**

**(c): The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has informed that operation of Battery Operated Vehicles (BOVs) has not been found feasible on the Tarakote track due to challenging terrain, steep gradient at most of the locations, sharp turns etc.**

**(d) & (e): As on date, 20-23 Nos. of BOVs with the capacity of 7 + 1 persons per vehicle ply daily on Himkoti Marg for ferrying pilgrims from Ardhkumari to Bhawan and back between 8 AM to 10 PM. However, to**

**ensure uninterrupted services for the intending pilgrims, 08 additional BOVs are placed in backup to replace the discharged operational BOVs.**

**Deploying additional BOVs may lead to congestion due to limited carrying capacity of track and also due to insufficient parking space for additional vehicles.**

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**A. Various activities undertaken by the Shrine Board:**

- I. **Establishment of Yatra Registration Counters:** For the registration of visiting pilgrims, the Shrine Board has established yatra registration counters at different locations of Katra & Jammu.
- II. **Helicopter Services:** Helicopter services are in operation since 1993 from Katra to Sanjichhat and back for ferrying of pilgrims especially those who are aged, handicapped, infirm and others who are unable to negotiate the steep climb on the hilly track. The services are being provided by the Shrine Board to the pilgrims on tendered lowest cost basis.
- III. **Battery Operated Vehicle services** were started in October 2003 from Adhkuwari to Bhawan and vice versa on the Himkoti Marg in order to facilitate patients, aged, infirm and handicapped pilgrims.
- IV. **RFID Registration of Mules & Porters:** In 2017-18, the Shrine Board started E-registration of all porters, horses / ponies along with their operators plying on the track through a biometric card which facilitated in operating traffic management system on the track through RFID technology.
- V. **Call Centre:** To provide information related to the pilgrimage of the Holy Shrine through single window and facilitate pilgrims, a Hi-tech, round the clock Call Centre has been established at Spiritual Growth Centre, Katra.
- VI. **Prasad Management Unit:**  
With the aim of availability of Prasad of Mata Ji to the devotees at their door steps through Postal Services, a dedicated Prasad Management Unit has been established.
- VII. **Disaster Management Task Forces / Stores:** A series of disaster management stores equipped with the latest gadgets have been established at all the prime / vital locations of the Shrine Board enroute track alongwith a well trained and energetic team of Disaster Management Task Forces at respective locations to handle any untoward incident / natural calamities on the track .

**B. Various Projects (Completed) by the Shrine Board:**

**I. Spiritual Growth Centre at Katra**

Development of a Spiritual Growth Centre (SGC) at an estimated cost of Rs. 8.93 crore was inaugurated in November 2011. This Centre comprises an auditorium with a seating capacity of 460 persons, a library, amphitheatre, exhibition halls, Audio-Visual Room, Conference Halls, meditation Hall & Prayer Hall etc.

## II. **Yatris Accommodations**

Requisite infrastructure, like accommodation, electricity, water, good sanitary conditions, dispensaries, telephones etc., has been established. Some of the important existing facilities are as below:

- i. Near the Railway Station Jammu, **The Vaishnavi Dham, Kalika Dham and Sarswati Dham.**
- ii. At Katra, **Niharika Complex, Shakti Bhawan, Trikuta Bhawan, Ashirwad Bhawan and Spiritual Growth Centre.**
- iii. At Adhkuwari, a five storeyed dormitory complex namely **Shailputri Bhawan.**
- iv. At Sanjichhat, 10 bedded dormitory and 8 rooms for accommodating the Yatris.
- v. At Bhawan, **Main Bhawan, Gouri Bhawan and Vaishnavi Bhawan** and covered **areas/halls** for the general public, Complexes namely the **Parvati Bhawan, Manokamna Bhawan Phase-I** and a free accommodation complex namely **Manokamna Phase - II.**

## III. **Construction of Tarakote Marg**

Tarakote Marg has been built by the Shrine Board. Besides, 1.5 km link road has also been constructed to connect the traditional Banganga Marg to the new Tarakote Marg.

Various facilities have been created along the Marg, which include Slope Stabilization Works, Darshani Deodi, Frisking Points, Bhojanalayas, Dispensary, Ultra filtered drinking water points, Welded Mesh all across the track, Modular Shelter Sheds, Illumination of the Marg through LED lighting, Toilet blocks and Viewpoints.

The Shrine Board has also started Langar Facility for the Yatris on 09-05-2019 on the Tarakote Marg.

## IV. **Construction of Temple Complex Adhkuwari:**

At its 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting (held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1997), the Shrine Board had accorded in-principle approval for undertaking the remodeling of Adhkuwari Complex consisting of various components to be taken up in a phased manner. As a part of the above project, the construction of a double storey Temple Complex at Adhkuwari (including the Queues with steel pipes & railing and Waiting Hall) was also taken-up for the facilitation of the pilgrims.

V. **Emergency Helipad near Panchi Staff Colony**

The Shrine Board had constructed a Helipad at Sanjichhat, which is being utilized for the private helicopter service contracted by the Shrine Board for the benefits of the pilgrims. The new Helipad near Panchi Staff Colony was completed on 04-7-2014 and made functional.

VI. **Alternate Track (Himkoti Marg)**

Construction of a new track with a very gradual gradient was undertaken in the early 1990s. The new track, popularly called the Himkoti Marg, was thrown open to the public in 1999.

Adequate numbers of toilet blocks have been constructed on the Alternate Track with a view to provide clean public utilities to the visiting devotees. Sufficient numbers of Shelter Sheds are also available. A zero-emission battery vehicle is run on this track.

VII. **Water Supply Schemes**

Following Water Supply Schemes were implemented:

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Name of Scheme</b>	<b>Installed Capacity (in GLPD)</b>
1.	Siar Dabri Tube Well (Ground Water) I	3,00,000
2.	Siar Dabri Tube Wells (Ground Water) II+ III	2,10,000
3.	Pai Nallah (Gravity Source at zero state Bhawan)	2,00,000
4.	Samkhal (Gravity source)	40,000
5.	Bhagh-e-Wala Ghrat Spring source	1,50,000
6.	Dhansar Pai Nallah scheme At present water being pumped from it: 3,00,000 GLPD Scheme envisaged for: 6,00,000 GLPD	6,00,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>15,00,000 GLPD /6.8 million litre per day</b>

Besides this, a systematic network of Reservoirs has been created from Katra to Bhawan for storage of water and its supply at Track.

- VIII. **Toilet Blocks enroute Bhawan**  
All the existing toilet blocks on the traditional & alternate tracks have been remodeled and upgraded.
- IX. **Passenger Ropeway (Between Bhawan & Bhairon Temple)**  
An imported "Bi-cable Jig Back Double Reversible fixed grip Passenger Ropeway with a cabin capacity of 45+1 & hourly capacity of 800 passengers" was setup between Bhawan and Bhairon Temple in December, 2018.
- X. **Material Ropeway Project**  
To ensure decongestion on the track from mules carrying material, an indigenous Bi-Cable Jig Back Double Reversible Material Ropeway has been installed at SiarDabri, Katra for transportation of material from Katra to Bhawan.
- XI. **Construction of Tripti Bhojanalaya at Bhawan:** Tripti Bhojanalaya has been constructed at Bhawan and opened for the pilgrims in February 2023.
- XII. **Multipurpose Audio-Video System and Multipurpose Audio System**  
The multipurpose Audio – Video System has been installed on the track primarily covering the Live Aarti, Yatra Facilities, Advisory etc. with 06 Outdoor Video Walls and 20 Indoor LED Screens. In addition, 2160 speakers have been installed enroute the track.

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